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Honor's First-Year Curriculum Institute: Reflection for Q2S Funding

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Honor's First-Year Curriculum Institute Reflection for Q2S Funding

Entering the Honor's First Year Curriculum Institute, our team had some clear goals driving the decisions we made, both within and across the "Golden Four" courses. Our weeklong institute focused on three of the "Golden Four" courses, which included HON 1100 (Writing Rhetorically), HON 1200 (Thinking Critically), and HON 1300 (Communicating Orally). Goals driving the design of these three courses, in regard to general and course-specific guidelines, included supporting a cohort experience for Honor's students, which emphasizes metacognition and integrative learning. Alternating between round-table discussion of readings and disciplinary and interdisciplinary task-groups, our team members were able to collaborate in reworking the curriculum to reach the previously mentioned goals.

In integrating metacognition across the three courses, we use Schraw (1998) for guidance. Schraw (1998) suggests metacognition involves knowledge of one's self as a learner, knowledge of strategies for learning and knowledge of when/why those strategies are appropriate, along with planning, monitoring and evaluating one's learning experiences. Being that a major component of metacognition is reflection, our institute developed a bank of reflection prompts to be distributed to students across the three classes. These prompts encourage students to think critically about themselves as learners, answering questions such as "how do you know when you've learned something, and how did you get there?" or "what is knowledge?" The prompts allow students to reflect on their learning in each course, thus developing greater self-awareness of one's thinking.

Promoting metacognition across the three courses also serves as a segue to integrative learning. Integrative learning challenges students to make connections between/across courses, examining how they interact with or influence one another. While the aforementioned reflection

prompts support integrative learning (being that students will see these prompts in each of the three classes) our institute proposes several other means for achieving this kind of learning, such as scaffolding assignments across courses and implementing student portfolios. In working with our interdisciplinary task-groups, our team had meaningful conversations about how we can encourage students to examine topics from multiple lenses and how we might facilitate scaffolding across the courses. Scaffolding assignments across courses, to us, entails having students examine a particular topic in one course, and then having them build upon/expand their knowledge of the same topic in another course; doing so requires that faculty teaching one of these three courses have an awareness of what is being taught in the other two, so we developed an outline faculty can visit to get a sense of what is being covered in the other first-year Honors courses (this also serves to ensure a degree of consistency in each individual course since they are taught by different faculty members in each discipline). To help with scaffolding and encourage integrative learning, we also developed what we are referring to as “student portfolios”. The portfolios will compile student work from each Honors course, allowing them to pull previous assignments from former classes, and make connections to current Honors classes in order to build upon their knowledge of topics or expand ideas they explored previously.

Our hopes in developing this curriculum revolve around intentionality on Honors faculty end, but also intentionality on the student's end. In examining what makes Honors courses different from GE courses outside of the program, we agreed that aside from the cohort experience students receive, Honors seeks to create a whole experience across the “Golden Four” in which the four courses constitute individual pieces of that whole; we are hopeful that in implementing reflection prompts, scaffolding, and student portfolios, we can achieve an

experience for students that is intentional and integrative. Further details on our curriculum can be found in our master document, titled “First Year Curriculum: Guidelines for Faculty.”

Reference

Schraw, G. (1998). Promoting general metacognitive awareness. *Instructional Science*, 26, 113 – 125. Retrieved from <http://wiki.biologyscholars.org/@api/deki/files/87/=schraw1998-meta.pdf>